

SPECIFICATION

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[A SUBSTITUTE FULFILLMENT SYSTEM]

Cross Reference to Related Applications

This application is a continuation-in-part of, claims priority to and incorporates by reference in their entirety the following United States Applications: Serial No.

09/217,116 filed on December 21, 1998 and Serial No. 09/419,266 filed on October 15, 1999.

Background of Invention

[0001] TECHNICAL FIELD. The present invention relates to a human resource management system. More specifically, this invention relates to a human resource management system for performing substitute fulfillment, compiling absence and entitlement information, notifications of unexpected events, schedules, instructional information, and notifications of benefits and policies.

[0002] BACKGROUND INFORMATION. To date, locating a substitute to fill a temporary employee absence in an organization, a process referred to as "substitute fulfillment," has generally been an unreliable, labor-intensive, and often panic-driven process. In any organization, the absence of a worker can have tangible consequences throughout the workplace. The effects of an employee absence vary with the nature of the work environment and with the scope of the employee's position. For example, upcoming deadlines and patterns of absenteeism can have different consequences within a particular organization. These consequences may be immediate and drastic, as when an assembly line shuts down due to the absence of a critical worker on the line or an airline pilot is not able to report to duty, or more attenuated and moderate, as when another employee is distracted from his primary task to answer telephones due to the absence of the office receptionist. These consequences may also include diversion of

management resources to address the consequences of the absence; delays in accomplishing projects in which the absentee has a role; displacement of other employees who must fulfill the absentee's role, either by express assignment or in order to complete their own tasks; reduced productivity; fines levied against the organization, particularly if the absence impacts safety or other government-regulated aspects of the work environment; and, in an extreme but not uncommon case, the inability to complete the central task of the organization.

[0003] In the latter case, assignment of a substitute worker is imperative or "mission-critical" -- without the substitute worker, the mission of the organization will not go forward. In this instance, filling the vacancy with a temporary substitute is the only acceptable alternative. In other cases, assignment of a substitute worker may not be mission-critical, but may nevertheless be a preferred policy in order to minimize the consequences of any absence. As a result, an upcoming absence may impact the workplace even before the absence period begins, as managers consider ways of compensating for the absence. Examples of work environments in which substitute fulfillment may be a mission-critical task include schools, emergency services, security services, airlines, and manufacturing plants, particularly plants with an assembly-line operation. The substitute of an absent teacher with a substitute teacher is a commonly occurring example of a mission-critical substitute-fulfillment objective.

[0004] Thus, when an employee notifies the organization that the employee will be absent, in an organization where a substitute is necessary or desired, management must necessarily turn its attention to the substitute fulfillment task or risk a noticeable reduction in the productivity of the organization or an inability to accomplish the business of the organization for the entire absence period. Although seemingly simple in concept, the substitute fulfillment task is non-trivial, requiring managers to devote significant time, effort and other resources, with no guarantee of success. The number of intermediate tasks that must be accomplished and constraints that must be satisfied to successfully realize a particular substitute in a timely manner complicates substitute fulfillment.

[0005] The absent worker often provides notice of his or her impending absence less

than a day, or even only several hours, before the worker is expected at work. Thus, management typically enters the substitute fulfillment task with little time to carry it out. Should there be no automation of the process in any aspect, then management must direct each step of the process.

[0006] Once the absence, which may extend from only hours to several days, or even months, is known, management must typically identify the scope of the absentee worker's critical responsibilities and skills to establish criteria for identifying a suitable substitute and develop a substitution candidate profile. Typically, multiple substitution candidate profiles may be established, with more demanding requirements for ideal or preferred substitutes, and with less demanding, threshold requirements for merely acceptable substitutes. Once the appropriate qualifications for an acceptable substitute are established, management may consider potential substitutes from a prepared list of candidates, or alternatively, management may identify potential candidates by some other means. Candidates may be regular employees of the affected workplace, for example, assembly line workers at a manufacturing plant who work different shifts from the absentee, or, persons from outside the workplace, for example, substitute teachers registered with a school district.

[0007] Management must then contact potential substitutes, typically by telephone, and determine whether potential substitutes are available and willing to work at the desired times in the desired position. Merely reaching potential substitutes may require several attempts. In the best case, management will eventually locate and assign an available substitute to cover the vacancy. In the worst case, management will be unable to find a substitute, despite having expended significant resources on the substitute fulfillment task. The substitute fulfillment task is substantially, but not wholly, complete when the available substitute is assigned. Typically, management performing the substitute fulfillment must then notify the appropriate persons that a substitute has been confirmed to facilitate inclusion of the substitute in the workplace. Due to the complexity of the substitute fulfillment task and the diversion of resources it entails, many workplaces may forego substitute fulfillment despite its desirability.

[0008] Substitute fulfillment is a routine practice in the education system, especially at the primary and secondary school levels. An example of substitute fulfillment for a high school teacher is provided herein as an accessible example and for reference. The substitute fulfillment task usually is triggered in a school when a teacher "calls in sick." Depending on the degree to which substitute fulfillment is automated in the school or district, locating a substitute teacher may require the efforts of a principal or other administrator, as well as several support staff members. Once a teacher has called in sick or otherwise signaled his absence, perhaps the night before or even the morning of the absence, the responsible administrator must disrupt her schedule to focus on the substitute fulfillment task. If she is unable to find a substitute teacher, the operation of the class, the department, and even the whole school may be disrupted. For example, the affected classes may fall behind in their scheduled curricula, an administrator or other teachers may have to neglect their other duties to cover for the absentee, and/or the school may be fined by the state for failing to provide an acceptable substitute teacher.

[0009] In order to perform the substitute fulfillment, generally the administrator first must determine which classes the absent teacher teaches and what skills are required of a substitute. For example, if an absent teacher is a high school science teacher who teaches AP Physics and basic chemistry, a substitute may be required not only to have a college degree but also specifically to have pursued college-level classes in both subjects. The administrator may then identify acceptable substitutes from those substitutes registered with the school district. The administrator then telephones potential substitutes to check their availability and willingness to take on the assignment. Often, the administrator may have to telephone an individual substitute several times to speak with the individual substitute and obtain a response. If the administrator locates and confirms a substitute, the administrator then has to inform the relevant school head or other teachers and complete paperwork for processing the substitute assignment.

[0010] Presently, computer systems for supporting substitute fulfillment are known in the education field. Individual schools in a school district typically share a single such system installed at the school district level. Typical system equipment includes at least one dedicated computer, combined with specialized telephony equipment, including

multiple phone lines, and other equipment. The equipment is expensive and set-up of the substitute fulfillment system may be technically demanding. A school district must invest in equipment adequate to handle its anticipated volume of use. In order to upgrade the system, often all of the equipment must be replaced, at substantial expense and inconvenience.

[0011] In these automated systems, necessary information relating to teachers, substitution criteria, registered substitutes, etc., is entered and maintained in a database through software on the system at the school district level. Individual schools may receive daily absence information from the school district office via facsimile. School district personnel must receive absence notification and initiate and oversee the substitute fulfillment procedure with support from the system. Significant involvement by school district personnel and the system vendor may be required, including hardware and software support of the system.

[0012] In light of the mission-critical nature of the substitute fulfillment task in the education system, the reliability of the system is a key concern. At present, substitute fulfillment systems are not adequately reliable. Power failures, computer network interruptions, telephone outages, computer system failures, unauthorized tampering, computer security crime, and other catastrophic events may undermine the efficacy of systems operated at the school district level. Because all information is maintained locally at the school district level, system failures may result in partial or total data loss. Backup systems entail additional expense, often not within the budgets of school systems.

[0013] Present systems are inherently limited in their capabilities due to equipment limitations, access constraints, and operation requirements; thus, each district typically purchases and installs a system and independently handles its own substitute fulfillment using the purchased system. As a result of the decentralized nature of substitute fulfillment management in present systems, it is virtually impossible for school districts to share information and common substitute fulfillment resources. For the same reason, compilation or aggregation of data relating to substitute fulfillment across school districts is difficult and uncommon. All of the costs, responsibilities, disadvantages, and inconveniences of substitute fulfillment are typically borne

exclusively and separately by individual school districts and schools.

[0014] Additionally, organizations including but not limited to schools, school districts and business entities require a centralized system and method of tracking workers' absences and entitlements, including but not limited to used and available vacation, personal and sick time. Administrators and workers have a time-consuming, inefficient and often inaccurate procedures for recording absences and entitlements. This results in labor-intensive recordation procedures and often no universal record (for access by both administrators and workers) detailing up-to-date absences and entitlements for the particular worker, a group of workers, or the overall workforce of the organization.

[0015] Organizations also require an efficient, current and easily accessible system and method for recording and announcing benefits, policies, current and unexpected events. Presently, organizations often resort to bulletin boards, which are not remotely accessible, or phone chains, which are inefficient, unreliable, and labor-intensive.

[0016] Illustrated here with particular examples, these same considerations are generally applicable to any organization. Due to the mission-critical nature of these tasks, it is crucial that any equipment or method relating to substitute fulfillment, information compilation or notification be reliable and efficient. It is an advantage of the present invention to provide a reliable, efficient system and method of substitute fulfillment, information compilation and notification. It is a further advantage of the present invention to provide an automated system and method that has low overhead and requires little organization involvement or oversight. It is another advantage of the present invention to broaden the scope of system connectivity and to include an interface to the Internet. It is yet another advantage of the present invention to maintain a central database of related information and to process data across multiple independent organizations. It is still another advantage of the present invention to provide trend analysis and reporting. A system and method for substitute fulfillment, information compilation and notification is useful to any organization that anticipates a need to assign substitute workers to fill temporary absences.

Summary of Invention

[0017] The present invention is directed to an automated system and method for performing substitute fulfillment for an organization that wishes to replace an employee during a temporary absence; performing placement of floating workers; tracking absences and entitlements of workers; notifying interested parties regarding unexpected events, daily announcements, policies and benefits; and bidding for temporary workers. In a preferred embodiment, the substitute fulfillment system includes a server configured for managing substitute fulfillment, compiling information, and notifying parties for multiple client organizations. The server maintains substitute fulfillment data, contact data, notification information and other data in a database for one or more client organizations employing the system. Organizations enter substitute fulfillment data and contact data via a website hosted by the server. The system sends updates to and receives updates from an organization's local database via the Internet or a telephone network.

[0018] In a preferred embodiment, an employee registers an absence by contacting the substitute fulfillment system. In another preferred embodiment, a business entity such as a school or school district registers contact information and the system contacts the desired parties regarding unexpected events, benefits, policies or daily announcements. Yet another embodiment encompasses a system which tracks information regarding workers' absences and entitlements.

[0019] In a preferred embodiment, the system provides the organization with the absence information. Once an absence is registered, the substitute fulfillment system uses the database to identify potential substitutes, temporary workers or floating workers ("substitutes") based on preferences or matching criteria selected by the organization and other information. The system then contacts the identified potential substitutes to inquire regarding their availability. In a preferred embodiment, the system continues to contact potential substitutes until one accepts the assignment or until the list is exhausted and all potential substitutes have refused the assignment.

[0020] If a substitute accepts the assignment, the system relays instructions, key information and messages from the worker to the substitute, if necessary. Whether or not a substitute is successfully assigned, the system contacts the organization and other desired recipients to report on the result. In a preferred embodiment, the

system relies on multiple communications channels to ensure reliability.

[0021] The system can also track the absences of each particular worker and the worker's entitlements. Upon accessing the system, the worker or an administrator can inquire about the worker's absences and entitlements. The system stores the information on the absences and entitlements in the database.

[0022] In another embodiment, the system records announcements regarding unexpected or current events, benefits or policies when the system is accessed by an authorized party for this purpose. The system then contacts the interested parties regarding the announcement, or allows the interested parties to access the announcement upon request. Additionally, if desired, reports detailing the contacted parties and the parties with which contact has been unsuccessful may be generated.

[0023] In another embodiment, the system can receive registration information from substitute workers who are not affiliated with a specific client. The registrant's information and professional skills can be made available to interested clients who will, upon approval, use this substitute worker for placement in their organization.

[0024] In another embodiment, the system allows substitutes to select positions available with multiple unaffiliated organizations. The substitute worker can manage their availability and work schedule across these multiple non-affiliated organizations.

[0025] In another embodiment, the system retrieves a list of available jobs and displays the list to a substitute worker once the substitute worker establishes a connection with the computer network. The substitute worker is able to select a position from the list without having to access the website, *e.g.*, using an instant messaging system.

[0026] In yet another embodiment, the system is able to conduct auctions of idle temporary workers. An organization that requires temporary workers may designate the skills and background required of the worker, the date and time for the position, as well as with the price the organization is willing to pay. The system then fulfills these requests starting with the highest bidder.

[0027] It is understood that "workplace" or "organization" or "entity", when used in this application, refers not only to more traditional work environments, but to any work

environment amenable to substitute fulfillment, information compilation or notification, such as an employee unit that works cooperatively together within a larger organization, for example, an emergency services unit.

Brief Description of Drawings

- [0028] In the following, the invention will be described in greater detail by way of examples and with reference to the attached drawings, in which:
- [0029] Figure 1A is a block diagram of an exemplary substitute fulfillment system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0030] Figure 1B is a detailed block diagram of an exemplary server configuration in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0031] Figure 1C is a block diagram of an exemplary server in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0032] Figure 2A is an exemplary flowchart of a method for performing substitute fulfillment according to an embodiment of the present invention;
- [0033] Figure 2B is an exemplary flowchart for allowing a substitute worker to secure a position via the Internet according an embodiment of the present invention;
- [0034] Figure 2C is an exemplary flowchart for notifying a designated group of an unexpected absence or event according to an embodiment of the present invention;
- [0035] Figure 2D is an exemplary flowchart for allowing a substitute worker to secure a position via an instant messaging system according to an embodiment of the present invention;
- [0036] Figure 3 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a worker record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0037] Figure 4 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a client record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0038] Figure 5 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a list of pick-lists generated in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

- [0039] Figure 6 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a school record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0040] Figure 7 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a county record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0041] Figure 8 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a district record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0042] Figure 9 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure of a user-preferences record stored in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0043] Figure 10 is a diagram showing a list of available reports selectable by a user in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0044] Figure 11 is a diagram showing an exemplary data structure for initial registration with a substitute fulfillment system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0045] Figure 12 is a representation of exemplary reports generated in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- [0046] Figures 13A-F is a state diagram illustrating the operation of a computer-implemented system for performing substitute fulfillment in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention; and
- [0047] Figure 14 depicts a block diagram illustrating a data structure used for storing information in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description

- [0048] As required, detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein. However, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention that may be embodied in various and alternative forms. The figures are not necessarily to scale, some features may be exaggerated or minimized to show details of particular components. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be limiting, but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present

invention.

[0049] Furthermore, element may be recited as being "coupled". Use of this terminology contemplates elements being connected together in such a way that there may be other components interstitially located between the specified elements, and that the elements so specified may be connected in fixed or movable relation to one another. Certain components may be described as being "adjacent" to one another. In such instances, it is expected that a relationship so characterized shall be interpreted to mean that the components are located proximate to one another, but not necessarily in contact with each other. Normally, there will be an absence of other components positioned there between, but this is not a requirement. Still further, some structural relationships or orientations may be designated with the word "substantially". In those cases, it is meant that the relationship or orientation is as described, with allowances for variations that do not effect the cooperation of the so described component or components.

[0050] Referring to Figure 1A, a block diagram of an exemplary substitute fulfillment system according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. As illustrated, the substitute fulfillment system 10 includes a server 12 and a database 14. In a preferred embodiment, the server 12 comprises one or more servers. The server 12 manages the system 10, which can include, for example, managing the storage of data, maintaining the database 14, communication interfaces, user frontends, and processing substitute fulfillment, information compilation or notification events. In a preferred embodiment, the database 14 comprises one or more databases. The database 14 can contain data files with data records for one or more client organizations, worker data records for each registered worker in each client organization, and substitute worker data records for each substitute worker registered with the system 10.

[0051] In a preferred embodiment, the server 12 can communicate with one or more officials 28, one or more workers 30, and/or one or more substitute workers 32 via a telephone network 16 or a computer network 18. An official 28, a worker 30, or a substitute worker 32 communicates with the server 12 using an electronic device. The electronic device can be, but is not limited to, a telephone, a cellular telephone, a

wireless telephone network, a smart telephone, a handheld, a pager, a computer, or any other electronic device which can receive and transmit information.

[0052] The server 12 is coupled to the telephone network 16 via one or more telephone communication links 20. The telephone network 16 can be, but is not limited to, a public telephone network, a cellular telephone network, a satellite telephone network, a pager network, or other types of telephone networks which can receive and transmit information. The server is coupled to the computer network 18 via one or more computer communication links 22. The computer network 18 can be, but is not limited to, the Internet, an Intranet, an instant messaging system, or any other type of computer network which can receive and transmit information.

[0053] In a preferred embodiment, the system 10 further comprises an Interactive Voice Response System (IVR) 25 for interfacing an official 28, worker, 30 and/or substitute worker 32 with the server 12. In a preferred embodiment, the IVR 25 resides on the server 12. Exemplary IVR systems 25 are the DialogicTM Model D-41ESC and D-240 product lines. In an alternate embodiment, the IVR system 25 can be outsourced to a Voice XML ASP provider with the server 12 containing code for IVR menus. In addition, the IVR system 25 can be used in conjunction with the telephone network 16 and/or the computer network 18, *e.g.*, Voice Over Internet Protocol (commonly referred to as Voice over IP). The system 10 can generate call instructions over a computer network 18, *e.g.*, the Internet to a gateway service (not shown) via one or more computer communication links 22. The gateway service translates the electronic calling instructions into a signal suitable for delivery to an end-user via a telephone. The end-user listens to the audible prompts and responds using the telephone which sends one or more signals back to the gateway, which in turn transmits the signal to the system 10 via the one or more computer communication links 22.

[0054] In a preferred embodiment, the system 10 further comprises a telephone network interface 24 and a computer network interface 26. The network interfaces 24, 26 allow an official 28, worker 30 and/or substitute worker 32 to interface with the server 12 via the telephone network 16 and/or the computer network 18. In a preferred embodiment, the network interfaces 24, 26 reside on the server 12. The network interface 24, 26 can be, but are not limited to, an IVR interface, a website

interface, an instant messaging interface, a wireless application protocol interface, an I-mode interface, a pager interface, a handheld interface, or any other type of network interface 24, 26 which can receive and transmit information over one or more telecommunication links 20, 22.

[0055] Referring to Figure 1B, a detailed block diagram of an exemplary server configuration in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. The substitute fulfillment system 10 comprises one or more servers. The database server 14, or database engine, contains the database, which can reside on one or more computers. In a preferred embodiment, the database server 14 is an Microsoft SQLTM server. The database can also be ported and run on an OracleTM database. The web server 38 contains webpages for one or more websites accessible from the Internet via the website interface 26. The report processing server 40 is configured to gather data and/or generate one or more reports for client organizations. In alternate embodiments, each server can run on a separate computer or on the same computer as any of the other servers. The server 12 can be coupled to telephony hardware 36. In a preferred embodiment, the telephony hardware 36 includes multiple phone lines having one or more telephone communication links 20 that are coupled to the telephone network 16. In a preferred embodiment, the central server 12 is further coupled to one or more routers 34 that are coupled to one or more network communication links 22 that are coupled to the Internet 18. In a preferred embodiment, the present invention is an Internet Application Server Provider (ASP), or a thin-client.

[0056] Referring to Figure 1C, a block diagram of an exemplary server in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. According to a preferred embodiment, the substitute fulfillment system 10 operates on a server 12 by executing one or more sequences of one or more instructions contained in the main memory 46. Such instructions may be read into main memory 46 from another computer readable medium, such as a storage device 50. Execution of the sequences of instructions contained in main memory 46 causes processor 52 to perform the process steps described herein. One or more processors 52 in a multi-processing arrangement may also be employed to execute the sequences of instructions contained in main memory 46. In alternative embodiments, hard-wired circuitry may

be used in place of or in combination with software instructions to implement the invention. Thus, embodiments of the invention are not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software.

[0057] The server 12 can be coupled via the bus 44 to a display 56, such as a cathode ray tube (CRT), for displaying information. An input device 58, including alphanumeric and other keys, is coupled to the bus 44 for communicating information and command selections to processor 52. Another type of user input device is a cursor control 60, such as a mouse, a trackball, or cursor direction keys for communicating direction information and command selections to processor 52 and for controlling cursor movement on the display 56. This input device typically has two degrees of freedom in two axes, a first axis (*e.g.* , x) and a second axis (*e.g.* , y), that allows the device to specify positions in a plane.

[0058] The term "computer-readable medium" as used herein refers to any medium that participates in providing instructions to processor 52 for execution. Such a medium may take many forms, including but not limited to, non-volatile media, volatile media, and transmission media. Non-volatile media include, for example, optical or magnetic disks. Volatile media include dynamic memory, such as main memory 46. Transmission media include coaxial cables, copper wire and fiber optics, including conductors that comprise a bus 44. Transmission media can also take the form of acoustic or electromagnetic waves, such as those generated during radio frequency (RF) and infrared (IR) data communications. Common forms of computer-readable media include, for example, a floppy disk, a flexible disk, hard disk, magnetic tape, any other magnetic medium, a CD-ROM, DVD, any other optical medium, punch cards, paper tape, any other physical medium, with patterns of holes, a RAM, a PROM (programmable ROM), and EPROM (electronically PROM) a FLASH-EPROM, any other memory chip or cartridge, a carrier wave, or any other medium from which a computer can read.

[0059] Various forms of computer-readable media may be involved in carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions to processor for execution. For example, the instructions may initially be borne on a magnetic disk of a remote computer. The remote computer can load instructions into its dynamic memory and send the

instructions over a telephone line using a modem. A modem local to computer system can receive the data on the telephone line and use an infrared transmitter to convert the data to an infrared signal. An infrared detector coupled to the bus 44 can receive the data carried in the infrared signal and place the data on the bus 44. Bus 44 carries the data to main memory 46, from which processor 52 retrieves and executes the instructions. The instructions received by main memory 46 may optionally be stored on storage device 50 either before or after execution by processor.

[0060] Computer system also includes a communication interface 54 coupled to bus 44. The communication interface 54 provides a two-way data communication coupling to a communication link 20, 22. The communication interface 54 provides an interface between the IVR system 25 and the website interface 26 and the communication links 20, 22, respectively. For example, the communication interface 54 may be an integrated services digital network (ISDN) card or modem to provide a data communication connection to a corresponding type of telephone line. As another example, communication interface 54 may be a local area network (LAN) card to provide a data communication connection to a compatible LAN. Wireless links may also be implemented. In any such implementation, communication interface 54 sends and receives electrical, radio frequency, or optical signals that carry digital streams representing various types of information.

[0061] The server 12 can send messages and receive data, including program code, through the network(s), communication link 20, 22 and communication interface 54. In the Internet example, the server 12 can transmit a requested code for an application program through the communication interface 54 and Internet 18.

[0062] *Registering with the System*

[0063] Client organizations must register with the substitute fulfillment system 10 in order for the system 10 to secure a substitute worker for an absent worker. The registration process requires a client organization to provide the registration information necessary to perform substitute fulfillment. In a preferred embodiment, the client organization provides this registration information in a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet can be sent via email or placed on a computer medium and sent in the mail. A worker then enters the registration information into the database 14 for the

client organization.

[0064] In an alternate embodiment, a client organization uses an applet, *e.g.*, a registration "wizard," to enter the registration information. The wizard presents a series of interfaces for guiding the organization through the registration process. Referring now to Figure 11, preferably, the registration wizard interface 250 requires the organization to submit identification 260 and billing information 258.

[0065] In a preferred embodiment, the server 12 displays one or more webpages that provide a client organization a series of forms to complete in order to build records, which are key to substitute identification for each worker 30 or potential substitute 32, as well as other records necessary for ancillary tasks. Examples of other records include general customer information and reporting preferences. The webpages are preferably tailored for collecting data needed to perform substitute fulfillment in the work environment of the organization. For example, if the customer is a school, the webpages can be tailored to collect data related to teachers, such as education background, certifications, schedules, and course information. The forms preferably conform to the data records that will be maintained by the server 12 in the database 14. The webpages may aid the client in completing particular fields in the forms by providing drop-down lists with options for that field.

[0066] Referring to Figure 5, a sample data structure 150 of a possible Pick-Lists that can be generated is illustrated. For example, the drop-down list may provide a list of all courses taught at the school so that the client can select the classes taught by a particular teacher to fill in that teacher's record. The server 12 can also automatically fill in certain fields for the client by drawing on information stored in other records. For example, referring to Figures 3 and 6, once a school has completed a school data record 166, the server 12 can fill in the school contact information 176, 178, and 180 for each teacher affiliated with a particular school. Once the information has been entered into the system 10, the information can subsequently be updated using the webpages via website interface 26.

[0067] In another embodiment, the primary data elements of the system 10 such as a worker, substitute worker and location data, can be electronically transmitted between a client's existing system and the system 10, thereby eliminating the need for manual

data entry. The electronic exchange of such data elements can be bi-directional, e.g., as soon as a specific worker's record is modified on the client's system, the data can be propagated from the client's system to the system 10, and vice versa where as soon as the worker records is modified in the system 10, the modified data can be electronically transmitted to the client's system.

[0068] *Typical Data Records in the System*

[0069] Referring to Figures 3–10, exemplary data records for a school district client according to an embodiment of the present invention are illustrated. The data records illustrate types of information that the system 10 typically uses, and how that information would typically be organized. In a preferred embodiment, the information in the data records is provided to the system 10 through the website interface.

[0070] Referring to Figure 3, an exemplary staff data record according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. As shown, teacher and substitute information stored in a staff data record 90, or data record 404, can include: name 92; title 94; social security number 96; a personal identification number (PIN) 98; billing information for billing substitute fulfillment services involving that teacher 100; certifications of the teacher 102; a list of teachers preferred to substitute for the teacher, or, alternatively, a list of criteria for selecting an appropriate substitute for the teacher 104; schedule information, preferably through a pop-up calendar 106, including work duties and absence information 108 (primarily for teachers) and availability 126 (primarily for substitutes); flags for special conditions 122, such as special instructions for a substitute or messages from a teacher to a substitute; affiliation information 112; contact information for the teacher 116; organization contact information for who to contact if that teacher calls in an absence or a substitute fulfillment is performed 118; classroom location information 120; entitlement balances 124, for how many absences (sick days, personal days, etc.) a teacher has left for the school year; and call time preferences 128 (primarily for substitutes) . The substitute schedule information is also stored in data record 403. The entitlement types are stored in data record 402.

[0071] Referring to Figure 4, exemplary business data for record-keeping, billing, and administrative functions according to an embodiment of the present invention is

illustrated. The database 14 can store a business data record 130 with fields such as: the billing address 132 of the customer organization, its mailing address 134, billing contact 136, emergency contacts 138, phone numbers 140, fax numbers 142, electronic mail addresses 144, and options selected 148. It is understood that the fields shown are only representative of the fields that may be used within the scope of the present invention. Also, these fields may be further broken down into more specific subfields, for example, multiple mailing addresses or different emergency contacts for different times of day, week, month, or year. In this way, the system 10 maintains the information needed to perform substitute fulfillment, information compilation or notification for a particular organization. Other possible records are shown in Figures 5-10, and include records for pick-list management 150; for school data 166; for county data 190; for district data 202; for client preferences 226; and for reporting schemes 230. The skills for each worker that may be used as a substitute or may require a substitute are recorded in data record 409, while the worker's personal identification number for accessing the system 10 is stored in data record 410. Data records 407 and 408 include the preferred skills of a potential substitute and the skills of the actual substitute who accepts the position, respectively. The records maintained in the main database of the system 10 are preferably stored on the database server 14.

[0072] *Substitute Worker Fulfillment*

[0073] Referring to Figure 2A, an exemplary flowchart of a method for performing substitute fulfillment according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. At step 62, the server 12 receives notification of an absentee. The notification can occur in several ways. In one embodiment, when a worker 30 covered by the system 10 becomes aware of an absence, the worker 30 contacts the server 12 by telephone, preferably through a toll-free number. Using keys on the standard telephone keypad, the worker 30 identifies himself or herself and enters the details of the pending absence. Alternatively, the worker 30 can contact a website hosted by the server 12 via the Internet 18. In an alternate embodiment, the worker 30 can access a website hosted by the server 12 via a link on a website hosted on behalf of the worker's employer. The worker 30 can access the website using a personal computer, an Internet capable telephone, a personal data assistant, or any other device that

provides access to the Internet. The information regarding the pending absence is stored in data record 401. In addition to providing information regarding his upcoming absence, the worker 30 can also record or transmit a message directed to the substitute worker or substitute 32. In one embodiment, if the worker 30 notifies the client organization, rather than the system 10, of the absence directly, then the organization can either call in the absence as described above or can access the website as described above.

[0074] Once the server 12 receives the notification of an absence, the server 12 records the absence in data record 401. The skills required of a substitute are stored in data record 405. The entitlement information regarding a pending absence is stored in data record 406. The server operates in the states shown in Figure 13A, including Initial (281), MainMenu (282), Whenstep1 (283), WhenAnotherDay (284), Shift (285), StartTime (286), AbsenceType (287), RecordInstructions (288), ConfirmAbsence (289), CheckComplete (290), Entitlements (291), ErrorState (292), Hangup (293), and Goodbye (294), and the events which invoke these states are also described in Figure 13A. For example, Generate Start Event signifies returning to the first action of the phone call, preferably to replay a greeting or a request for an identification number. MainMenu (282) prompts the worker to push 1 on the telephone if the worker desires to record an absence, 2 to listen to entitlement day balances, including but not limited to vacation, personal and sick days remaining, and 3 for special instructions regarding a particular workplace. In Shift (285), if the worker's absence will not begin at the start of the work shift, the system proceeds to StartTime (286), during which worker is prompted for the start time of the absence. The worker is prompted to designate an absence type, which types have been designated by the Client, in state 287. In Entitlements (291), "List Entitlement Day Balances" signifies notifying the worker of entitlements, including but not limited to, used and remaining vacation, sick and personal days.

[0075] At step 63, the system 10 distributes absence notifications to relevant client personnel 28. The absence notifications can be distributed on a regular basis at a time specified in advance by the client or on an event basis, *e.g.*, upon each notification. Referring to Figure 12, an exemplary notification in the form of summary absence reports 276 is illustrated. The information for the absence reports is stored on data

record 400. For example, the server 12 can transmit a summary absence report 276 for each workday at 5:00 p.m. on the previous day and again at 7:00 a.m. that day to selected client personnel. The summary absence reports 276 can be distributed via facsimile, electronic mail, applet, or through the website to any parties designated by the client as "need-to-know" parties for all absences or for particular absences. Notification preferences are stored within the server 12. In a preferred embodiment, designated client personnel receive both an absence notification via electronic mail as soon as the absence is registered and a summary absence report 276 via facsimile at a pre-set time. Use of multiple communications channels builds additional reliability into the system 10.

[0076] At step 64, the substitute fulfillment system 10 identifies potential substitutes 32 for the absent worker 30. The organization typically has a pool of potential substitutes 32. If the organization has chosen to identify particular substitutes 32 suitable for a particular worker 30, then the substitute fulfillment system 10 accesses a list of the identified substitutes 32 which is used in the next step. Alternatively, if the organization has identified only qualifications or criteria for selecting an acceptable substitute 32 for a particular worker 30, then the substitute fulfillment system 10 compiles a list of potential substitutes by searching for potential substitutes with the requisite qualifications in a master list of substitutes 32 available to the organization located in the database 14. In a preferred embodiment, the substitute fulfillment system 10 compiles a list of preferred substitutes and a back-up list of acceptable substitutes.

[0077] At step 65, the system 10 contacts potential substitutes 32 via the telephone network using the IVR system 24. The IVR system 24 interfaces logically with callers, usually employing a set of pre-recorded prompts, a database, and dynamic selection criteria. The number called, and the caller identification are recorded in data record 411. The server operates during step 82 in the states including MakeTheCall (308), CallAnalysis (309), Identify (310), PresentRequest (311), RejectRequest (312), AcceptRequest (313), ErrorState (314), Goodbye (315), and Hangup (316) which are displayed in Figure 13D. The invoking events for each of these states are set forth in Figure 13D, and examples of these events follow:

[0078] In Identify (310), the potential substitute is prompted for an identification number. In PresentRequest (311), the request is played and the potential substitute is prompted for 1 to replay the request, 2 to accept and 3 to reject. Further, the potential substitute is prompted for 1 to reject future requests, or 2 to allow additional requests to be phoned to the potential substitute, in RejectRequest (312). If the potential substitute accepts the request, a confirmation number is played in AcceptRequest (313).

[0079] At step 66, the system 10 continues to contact the potential substitute workers listed on the generated list over a period of time until a substitute worker 32 accepts a position or until the generated list is exhausted. If multiple lists of potential substitutes have been compiled, the system 10 first searches the list of preferred substitutes before resorting to secondary lists. The client organization may specify appropriate call times and other parameters for the IVR system 24. If a substitute worker 32 accepts the assignment, the server 12 can relay instructions from the organization or messages from the absent worker 30 to the substitute worker 32.

[0080] At step 67, the system 10 generates one or more reports and send the reports to organization personnel 28, *e.g.*, officials, designated for receipt of the reports. Clients may specify different personnel distribution lists for various reports. Reports may be mailed electronically or faxed, or both by server 12. Referring to Figure 12, exemplary reports generated by the system according to an embodiment of the present invention. The system 10 generates summary absentee reports 276, summary substitute assignment reports 278, call history reports 279, and unfulfilled substitute assignment reports 280 with the details of any successful substitute, all calls made, and information regarding any vacancy that could not be filled. The information for the reports is stored in data record 400.

[0081] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, all desired transaction information, including all absence notifications, substitute requirements, substitute fulfillment attempts, substitute fulfillment successes and failures, web site accesses, employment searches by substitutes, etc., are stored in the database 14.

[0082] *List of Opportunities for Substitute Workers*

[0083] In a preferred embodiment, using the information in the database 14, the server 12 can generate a listing of opportunities for substitute workers 32 and make the listing available through a web site interface. Substitute workers 32 can access the site and select an assignment. If the same assignment is currently being processed or waiting to be processed by the IVR system 24, then the assignment selection is recognized, further processing is halted, and appropriate reports generated. Data record 400 stores the information for said reports.

[0084] Referring to Figure 2B, an exemplary flowchart for allowing substitute workers to secure a position via the Internet is illustrated. At step 70, the server 12 receives notification of an absentee. Step 70 is equivalent to step 62 in Figure 2A.

[0085] At step 71, the system 10 generates a list of positions that need to be filled. The list can be generated on a periodic basis, *e.g.*, at the same time everyday, or on an event basis, *e.g.* adding a new position upon the receipt of an absentee notification. In the preferred embodiment, positions that the organization has chosen to identify particular substitutes 32 suitable for a particular worker 30, then the position is not listed unless the system 10 cannot secure an identified substitute 32.

[0086] At step 72, the system 10 posts or displays the list on a website hosted on the server 12.

[0087] At step 73, a response to the posted position is received by the system 10 via the Internet.

[0088] At step 74, the system 10 determines if the substitute worker 32 is qualified to fill-in for the absent worker 30. The determination is made by comparing the qualifications of the potential substitute worker 32 with the qualifications or criteria for the position that are identified by the client organization. If the system 10 determines that the potential substitute worker 32 is qualified, then the system 10 secures the substitute worker 32 to cover for the absent worker 30. If a substitute worker 32 accepts the assignment, the server 12 can relay instructions from the organization or messages from the absent worker 30 to the substitute worker 32.

[0089] At step 75, the system 10 notifies the client organization of the position fulfillment. This can be accomplished by generating one or more reports and sending

the reports to organization personnel 28, *e.g.*., officials, designated for receipt of the reports. Client organizations can specify different personnel distribution lists for various reports. Reports may be mailed electronically, faxed, or both by server 12. Referring to Figure 12, exemplary reports generated by the system according to an embodiment of the present invention. The system 10 generates summary absentee reports 276, summary substitute assignment reports 278, call history reports 279, and unfulfilled substitute assignment reports 280 with the details of any successful substitute, all calls made, and information regarding any vacancy that could not be filled. The information for the reports is stored in data record 400.

[0090] The server 12 is capable of handling multiple clients and multiple substitute fulfillment tasks simultaneously. The system 10 provides opportunities to match substitutes across organizations, to aggregate data and to review trends. In a preferred embodiment, the server 12 and database 14 track substitute fulfillment data globally, identify opportunities for inter-organization substitute referral or fulfillment, and report on substitute fulfillment needs and other trends. The report information is stored in data record 400. For example, the server 12 may identify substitute teachers registered in a district adjacent to a customer school district and inform the customer school district. In another example, the substitute fulfillment system may identify hot spots where substitutes with particular qualifications are in demand.

[0091] *Notification System of an Unexpected Absence*

[0092] In a preferred embodiment, the system 10 can notify designated groups of people of an absence over the telephone. The client in this embodiment is an organization including but not limited to school or business entity. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each student in the school's body or each worker, including but not limited to, phone numbers and email addresses of parents" and guardian's, student's classes, and student's year.

[0093] Referring to Figure 2C, an exemplary flowchart for notifying a designated group of an unexpected absence according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. At step 76, the system receives a notification of an unexpected absence via a phone call or email. Information regarding the call, including the number called is stored at data record 411. At step 76, the server 12 transitions between the states

shown in Figure 13C, which included RecordFilesMenu (303), RecordFiles (304), ErrorState (305), Goodbye (306) and Hangup (307). These states are invoked by the events set fourth in Figure 13C and several example events follow. The caller is prompted for the recording ID, in order to prevent an unauthorized recording in RecordFilesMenu (303). In RecordFiles (304), if the caller presses 1 on the telephone, the system 10 prompts the caller to record a new recording or to verify that the existing recording is acceptable.

[0094] At step 77, the system 10 distributes notifications of absence to interested parties, including but not limited to, administrators or managers. These notifications may be in the form of summary absence reports distributed by facsimile, electronic mail, or via telephone to any parties designated by the client as a contact person for all absences or for particular absences, including absences for a particular class year.

[0095] At step 78, the system 10 contacts each persons listed in the contact information ("contacts") for each absent student or worker, including but not limited to parents and guardians, preferably via the IVR system 25 and telephone network 16. The system 10 calls the contacts in order to receive an acknowledgement that the student or worker is absent for an acceptable reason.

[0096] At step 79, the system 10 continues to call particular contacts for the student or worker until the list is exhausted. If the list is not exhausted, the system 10 continues to call the next contact on the list.

[0097] At step 80, the system 10 generates and distributes a report of unacknowledged absences from the server to designated personnel in the client organization.

[0098] *Notification System of an Unexpected Event*

[0099] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to notify designated groups of people over the telephone of an unexpected event. The client in this embodiment includes but is not limited to a school, school district, or business entity. The data records, in a preferred embodiment, contain information related to contact information for each student or worker of the client's, including but not limited to, phone numbers for workers, parents, and guardians, email addresses, student's classes, student's grade, and the content of the message representing the unexpected

event.

[0100] Referring to Figure 2C again, an exemplary flowchart for notifying a designated group of an unexpected event according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. At step 76, the system 10 receives a phone call or email regarding an unexpected event or announcement of the client, and records a new message regarding the unexpected event or announcement. The server 12 then operates in and transitions between the states shown in Figure 13B, which include MainMenu (295), RecordSchoolMenu (296), RecordSchool (297), Record EntTypesMenu (298), RecordEntTypes (299), ErrorState (300), Goodbye (301), and Hangup (302). The events which invoke and transition between these states are shown in Figure 13B.

[0101] At step 78, the server 12 then contacts the persons listed in the contact information for each affected student or worker, including but not limited to parents and guardians, preferably using the IVR system 25 and telephone network 16 to notify the contacts of the event or announcement. At step 79, the system 10 continues to call particular contacts for the student or worker until the list is exhausted. If the list is not exhausted, the system 10 continues to call the next contact on the list. At step 80, the system 10 generates and distributes a report of unacknowledged event announcements from the server to designated personnel in the client organization. The report can be distributed via facsimile, electronic mail, or via an applet to any parties designated by the client as a contact person for all events or for particular events. All information for the reports is stored in data record 400.

[0102] Referring to Figure 2D, an exemplary flowchart for allowing a substitute worker to secure a position via an instant messaging system according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. At step 81, a substitute worker 32 downloads an instant messaging (IM) applet from the server 12 over a communication network 16, 18 where the applet is installed onto a computing device. Examples of IM applets include, but are not limited to, AOL IM, MSN IM, ICQ IM, and any other instant messaging applets.

[0103] At step 82, the system 10 generates a list of positions that need to be filled in response to the substitute worker 32 establishing a connection to the telephone network 16 or computer network 18. In a preferred embodiment, the list of positions

is a list of positions that need to be filled in which the substitute worker 32 is qualified to fill. In a preferred embodiment, the list of positions is a list of positions that one or more organizations has chosen to identify the particular substitute worker 32 who established the connection.

[0104] At step 83, the system 10 posts or displays the list on the computing device of the substitute worker 32. Using the IM applet, the substitute worker 32 can configure intervals over which an updated list of positions to be filled is retrieved and refreshed on the IM applet.

[0105] At step 84, a response to the posted position is received by the system 10 via the IM applet. Thus, the substitute worker 32 is able to interact with the system 10 without accessing the website.

[0106] At step 85, the system 10 determines if the substitute worker 32 is qualified to fill-in for the absent worker 30. The determination is made by comparing the qualifications of the potential substitute worker 32 with the qualifications or criteria for the position that are identified by the client organization. If the system 10 determines that the potential substitute worker 32 is qualified, then the system 10 secures the substitute worker 32 to cover for the absent worker 30. If a substitute worker 32 accepts the assignment, the server 12 can relay instructions from the organization or messages from the absent worker 30 to the substitute worker 32 via the IM applet. In a preferred embodiment, the substitute worker 32 can participate in an interactive online message interaction, commonly known as an "online chat" with either an official 28 from the client organization or the worker 30 the substitute worker 32 is temporarily replacing. In addition, the substitute worker 32 can receive a stored message or messages from the client organization or the worker 30 the substitute worker 32 is temporarily replacing.

[0107] At step 86, the system 10 notifies the client organization of the position fulfillment. This can be accomplished by generating one or more reports and sending the reports to organization personnel 28, *e.g.*, officials, designated for receipt of the reports. Client organizations can specify different personnel distribution lists for various reports. Reports may be mailed electronically or faxed, or both by server 12. Referring to Figure 12, exemplary reports generated by the system according to an

embodiment of the present invention. The system 10 generates summary absentee reports 276, summary substitute assignment reports 278, call history reports 279, and unfulfilled substitute assignment reports 280 with the details of any successful substitute, all calls made, and information regarding any vacancy that could not be filled. The information for said reports is stored in data record 400.

[0108] *System for Recording Daily Announcements*

[0109] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to notify designated groups of people over the telephone of daily announcements, including but not limited to school schedules. The client in this embodiment is a school, school district, or business entity.

[0110] In this embodiment, the server operates in and transitions between the states shown in Figure 13B, which include MainMenu (295), RecordSchoolMenu (296), RecordSchool (297), RecordEntTypesMenu (298), RecordEntTypes (299), ErrorState (300), Goodbye (301), and Hangup (302). The events which invoke and transition between these states are shown in Figure 13B. For example, the system 10 prompts the caller in MainMenu (295) to enter 1 to reach the RecordSchoolMenu (296), in order to record an announcement and 2 to reach the RecordEntTypesMenu (298), in order to record a message regarding entitlement types. Information regarding entitlement types is stored in data record 402. In RecordSchoolMenu (296), the caller is prompted for the valid school recording identification, which prevents unauthorized recordings, and similarly in RecordEntTypesMenu (298), the caller is prompted for the valid Entitlement Type Recording ID, which prevents unauthorized recordings. In RecordSchool (297) and RecordEntTypes (299), if caller presses 1 on the telephone, the system 10 prompts the caller to record a new recording or to verify that the existing recording is acceptable.

[0111] *Notification System of Patient-Related Information*

[0112] The invention, in another preferred embodiment, may be used to notify doctors of important patient related information, *e.g.*, patient tests, and patient status. The system 10 receives phone calls and emails regarding the patient related information. The system 10 distributes notifications of the information via voice recorded

messages that are announced to many doctors at once using the contact data for the relevant doctors.

[0113] *Substitute Teller Fulfillment System*

[0114] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to fulfill the substitute teller requirements in a retail bank. The client in this embodiment is a retail bank or branch office. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each substitute teller, including but not limited to, phone numbers, email addresses, and qualifications. At step 62, the system 10 receives a phone call or email regarding an absence of a teller, and the information regarding this absence is stored in data record 401. At step 64, the system 10 identifies potential substitutes 32 for the absent teller 30. At step 65, the server 12 then contacts the potential substitute tellers, preferably via the telephone network 16 using the IVR system 24. During step 65, the server 12 proceeds in and transitions between the states in Figure 13D, which include MakeTheCall (308), CallAnalysis (309), Identity (310), Present Request (311), RejectRequest (312), AcceptRequest (313), ErrorState (314), Hangup (315) and Goodbye (316). The events which invoke these states and transitions between the states are set forth in Figure 13D. Provided the system was able to contact the substitute teller, the substitute teller is able to accept or reject the position.

[0115] Alternatively, the client may have a pool of floating tellers who fill the vacancies in the bank in a given day. The server 12 then contacts the floating tellers, preferably by telephone, email, or facsimile to inform the floating teller to report to a particular branch office. If the server 12 attempts to contact the floating tellers via facsimile, the server 12 proceeds in and transitions between the states set forth in Figure 13E. The possible states of the server include MakeTheCall (317), CallAnalysis (318), FaxSend (319), ErrorState (320), Goodbye (321) and Hangup (322). Figure 13E sets forth the events which trigger these states and the transitions between these states.

[0116] Upon acceptance by a substitute teller or floating teller or exhaustion of the list of substitute tellers or floating tellers, the system 10 generates reports detailing who is absent, who was contacted regarding the position, who has accepted the position and the qualifications of the substitute or floating teller. The information compiled in the

reports is stored in data record 400.

[0117] *Worker Substitute Fulfillment System*

[0118] The invention, in another preferred embodiment, may be used to fulfill the substitute worker requirements for workers, including but not limited to, fire police, security staff, ambulance workers, wait staff, cooks, bus boys, cashiers, sales people, production line workers, pilots and flight attendants. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each substitute worker, including but not limited to, phone numbers, electronic identifiers, email addresses, and qualifications, and the shifts worked by the workers. At step 62, the system 10 receives a phone call or email regarding an absence of a worker, and stores this information in data record 401. At step 64, the system 10 identifies potential substitutes 32 for the absent worker 30. At step 65, the server 12 then contacts the potential substitute workers 30, who are not working the specified shift, preferably using the IVR system 24 and telephone network 16. Provided the system 10 was able to contact the substitute worker 32, the substitute worker 32 is able to accept or reject the position. During step 65, the server proceeds in and transitions between the states in Figure 13D, which include MakeTheCall (308), CallAnalysis (309), Identity (310), Present Request (311), RejectRequest (312), AcceptRequest (313), ErrorState (314), Hangup (315) and Goodbye (316). The events which invoke these states and transitions between the states are set forth in Figure 13D. Provided the system was able to contact the substitute worker, the substitute worker is able to accept or reject the position.

[0119] *Temporary Worker Agency Fulfillment System*

[0120] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to fulfill the substitute worker requirements through a temporary worker agency. This embodiment of the invention may be used to find substitutes for material moving and equipment operators, nurses, doctors, x-ray technicians, physical therapy workers, and surgical assistants. The client in this embodiment is a temporary worker agency. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each substitute worker, including but not limited to, phone numbers, email addresses, particular position sought and qualifications. At step 62, the system 10 receives a

phone call or email from a customer of the client designating the position to be filled, and the information is stored in data record 401. Additionally, the absent worker of the client's customer may directly contact the system 10 preferably via telephone or email. At step 64, the system 10 identifies potential substitutes 32 for the absent teller 30.

[0121] At step 65, the server 12 then contacts the potential substitutes with the requisite qualifications, preferably using the IVR system 24 and telephone network 16. Provided the system was able to contact the substitute 32, the substitute 32 is able to accept or reject the position. During step 65, the server 12 proceeds in and transitions between the states in Figure 13D, which include MakeTheCall (308), CallAnalysis (309), Identity (310), PresentRequest (311), RejectRequest (312), AcceptRequest (313), ErrorState (314), Hangup (315) and Goodbye (316). The events which invoke these states and transitions between the states are set forth in Figure 13D.

[0122] The system 10 generates reports detailing who is absent, who was contacted regarding the position, who has accepted the position and the qualifications of the substitute. According the client's instructions, these reports may be sent to the client and the client's customers. Reports may be customized to show the information required by each of the client's customers, said information in data record 400.

[0123] *Notification System for Union Policies and Benefits*

[0124] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to notify union members of policies and benefits. The client is a union or unionized organization. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each member, including but not limited to, phone numbers, email addresses, position and employer. At step 62, the system 10 receives a phone call or email from the client designating new policies or benefits for union members, or business matters for the union. At step 65, the server 12 then contacts the members who are affected by the policies, benefits or business matters, preferably using the IVR system 24 and telephone network 16. The system 10 generates reports detailing who was successfully and unsuccessfully contacted.

[0125] *System for Recording Absences and Entitlements*

[0126] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to record absences for a business entity. The client is a business entity, such as a corporation. The data records may contain information related to contact information for each worker, including but not limited to, schedule, phone numbers, email addresses, position and entitled vacation, sick and personal time. The system 10 receives a phone call or email from a worker designating an absence and reason for the absence, including but not limited to sick time, vacation time and personal time, and stores the information in data record 401. The system 10 generates reports from data record 400 detailing who is absent, and the absent worker's record for absences including the type of absence. These reports may include sick time, vacation time and personal time used and remaining.

[0127] *System for Idle Temporary Worker Auctions*

[0128] In another preferred embodiment, the invention may be used to allow different clients to bid for temporary workers. The client would designate the required skills and pertinent information for the temporary worker, *e.g.*, the required degrees, the required experience, the geographical location of the position and the dates of the position. Additionally, the client would designate how much it was willing to pay for the temporary worker. The system 10 then processes all requests for temporary workers for the date and time required and fulfills the requests based upon the highest bidder receiving the most qualified temporary worker for the position first, then the next highest bidders request is fulfilled and so on until all requests are fulfilled or no acceptable temporary workers are available.

[0129] The substitute fulfillment, information compilation or notification database 34 is depicted in Figures 14A–H and, more particularly, from data records 400 to 410. The states in which and between which the system operates are shown in Figure 13A–F.

[0130] Although the invention has been described in detail for the purpose of illustration, it is to be understood that such detail is solely for that purpose and that numerous modifications, alterations and changes can be made therein by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention except as it may be limited by the claims.